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American Constitutional Association...

Life in a West Virginia coal field

Charleston, W. Va.

1923

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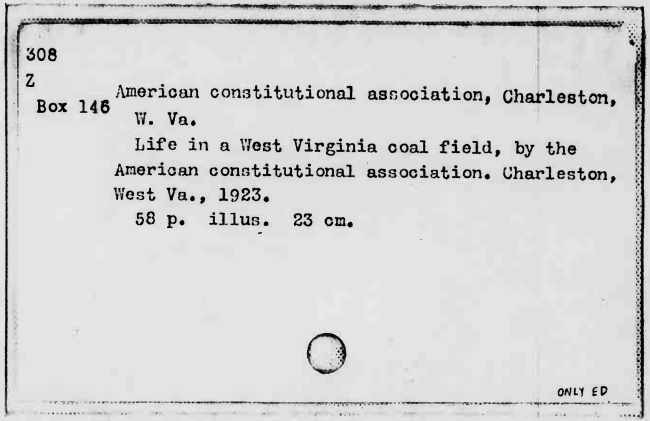

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LIFE IN A WEST VIRGINIA COAL FIELD

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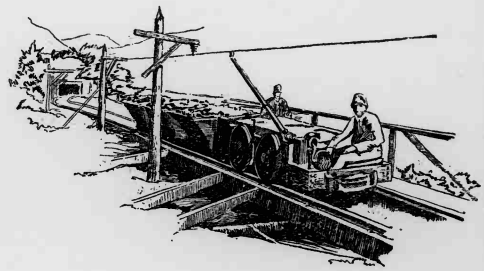
AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION
CHARLESTON, W. VA.
1923

LIFE IN A WEST VIRGINIA COAL FIELD



BY THE
AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION
CHARLESTON, WEST VA.
1923

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Preface

THE attention of the public is respectfully invited to the following report of the American Constitutional Association, describing the normal life existing in the coal fields of West Virginia.

¶ This report is based upon information derived by Mr. Phil M. Conley, Managing Director of the Association, as the result of a careful study made by him and his assistants of the various subjects under consideration in one of the oldest mining districts of the State.

¶ An unbiased study of life in the coal fields of West Virginia by a gentleman of the high standing and character of Mr. Conley, merits the confidence of all persons who desire to know the facts relative to this subject and is a refutation of many mis-statements of propagandists sent into the coal fields by radical and irresponsible organizations.

Very respectfully,

E. F. MORGAN,

Governor of West Virginia.

INTRODUCTION

During the past few months there have appeared in the eastern press many scurrilous articles about the State of West Virginia. The writers of these articles have depicted the State and all of its citizens in a dark, drab picture. The basis for most of the sensational stories has been found in the coal industry and the conditions that are supposed to prevail in mining towns in this State. Such statements have been made about the State as: "The most lawless State in the Union," and "An island of barbarity in a sea of civilization."

These attacks have been against the honor of the State and its people. They have been injurious to the welfare, prosperity, progress, business and social interests of West Virginia. If the slanderous articles had pertained to certain individuals or interests, these people would have had recourse in libel suits, but the attacks have been against one and one-half million citizens of West Virginia.

The American Constitutional Association, a West Virginia patriotic organization, deemed it a service to the State to ascertain whether life in the coal fields is oppressive to the American citizens living there, and whether conditions are as pictured by insidious propagandists and biased critics from other states.

With this in mind the Association has made a study in the Kanawha and Coal River Valleys, believing that this section is typical of the coal fields of West Virginia. Here are to be found good towns and poor towns, old towns and new towns, union, non-union and open shop, progressive and backward towns.

Miss Margaret H. Bottum, who has spent three and a half years in community work in the West Virginia coal

fields, spent six months in the Kanawha and Coal River Valleys collecting data and compiling information contained in this report. She interviewed miners, their wives and children, railroad employees, company officials, mine owners, and public officials. A uniform outline for securing data was used in each town visited so there would be no discrepancies.

This report contains statements of facts; not expressions of opinions.

PHIL M. CONLEY,
Managing Director,
AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION
CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA

A STUDY MADE IN THE KANAWHA AND COAL RIVER VALLEYS 1923

I

THE MINING TOWN

In this study it is not our object to defend or condemn; rather it is our intention to give a picture of the life of the people in typical mining towns. We want to present a close-up view, a realistic touch of the actual conditions under which about one hundred thousand people live in West Virginia.

The coal fields! Horrors! A dark foreboding, drab picture immediately presents itself. Many newspaper reporters, welfare workers, reformers and agitators from other states have come to West Virginia, spent a few days in the mining towns interviewing workmen and their families. They have collected material for sensational stories and elaborate reports containing generalities that say nothing definite, but suggest many pictures of conditions that do not exist.

Generalizations about life in the coal fields are about as impressive to the people who really have studied the situation as a sweeping statement would be comparing the life of the people in New York with that of the citizens of Gopher Prairie. In the coal fields are found good and bad; rich and poor; clean and filthy; learned and illiterate; cultured and uncouth—just the same as one may find in Boston, New York or Philadelphia.

There is no such thing as an average town anymore than there is an average city, an average state, or an average nation. All mining towns are similar, but no two are alike in any respect. It is true an average may be approached taking into account a number of towns in the

same locality. But this attempted average could not possibly be made to apply to any other section of the country.

Mining towns are different from any other communities. They are strictly industrial communities. Practically every man living in a mining town works for the coal company. The only reason for the existence of the town is for the production of coal.

The 58 towns covered in this report are necessarily unincorporated. For this reason the officials of the coal companies must, to a large extent, look after the matter of law enforcement and the protection of citizens living in their communities.

In addition, the companies must assume responsibility for seeing that proper school facilities, churches, Sunday schools, amusement halls, and other community activities are provided. Homes for the workmen, stores, streets, walks and other necessary town conditions must be built by the coal companies.

When a mining town is started, after the engineers have completed their work, the executives and workmen must live in rough shanties until homes are completed for them. The construction job is hard and often discouraging. Inconveniences must be endured.

A commissary is established out of which everybody gets supplies. Everything is temporary at first. It must be so. For this reason the place is called a "mining camp". But with the completion of homes, stores, schools, churches and streets, a normal community life is established. The place then becomes a town in every sense of the word.

Topographical conditions determine to a large extent the living conditions in every mining town. Some are situated along rivers where the valleys are wide and the nearby rolling hills suitable for home building and gardening. Others are on bottom lands where the valleys are wide enough for the building of large towns. Still others are in narrow valleys, cramped between steep mountains and limited to one long road or street.

Where the coal is, there the town must be built. The mining towns studied are located in a picturesque moun-

tain country. It is necessarily rough. But one is struck with wonder at the way the level land is utilized for town purposes. And the hillside gardens by intensive cultivation produce great quantities of vegetables.

The towns studied are perfectly normal small towns. They are more comfortable, and have more conveniences than are to be found in the ordinary independent small town. Sanitary conditions in most of the towns visited are better than are found in most cities. The citizens of these towns are average people such as are found in any American industrial community.

This is the oldest coal field in the State. Mines here were opened as early as 1843. On the other hand some of the mines have been opened during the past four years. Owing to these conditions, we feel that this section is typical of all the mining territory in the State. The older towns have a few undesirable features. The newer communities have profited by the mistakes made by the engineers who built the first towns.

No company would be expected to tear down its houses merely because mistakes had been made in design and construction. Cities at the present time have traffic jams on account of their narrow streets built before the automobile was thought of. Yet the citizens know that it would not be feasible to tear down the permanent buildings to widen the streets.

The 58 towns represented in this report are located in six counties in West Virginia as follows: Kanawha, 21; Fayette, 12; Boone, 10; Raleigh, 6; Logan, 6; and Putnam, 3; a total of 58.

The territory covered by this report has a population of 36,445 people—coal mine employees and their families, living in this section of the West Virginia coal fields.

Of this total population 19 per cent are negroes, 12 per cent are of foreign birth or parentage, and 69 per cent are native white Americans.

The report covers 57 per cent of the daily tonnage allotments of the district as of June 1st, 1923, or 59,244 tons per day.

II

SOCIAL LIFE IN THE MINING TOWNS

Social and recreational life in the mining town is equal to, and more often, superior to that of the small independent town of the same population.

There are many opportunities for pleasure and outdoor recreation which the mining population find of advantage. Swimming, fishing and hunting of small game are popular in season.

Automobiles are frequent on the shady mountain roads after work hours, filled to capacity with relatives and friends out for an evening ride or to visit some friends, attend a social function or moving picture.

"Everybody plays marbles and pitches horseshoes," was a common remark in the mining towns. Croquet is popular in some communities. The card playing fad has reached the mining town with as much popularity as elsewhere. It is, however, in fair weather, an outdoor game played by the men on rocks or other improvised tables under the shade trees.

The most popular game of the coal field is baseball. Fifty-six of the towns reported teams, local games both for colored and white where the population was mixed, and the majority of teams play inter-town games. The companies are generous in their contributions towards this activity, for uniforms, equipment and ball fields, and great interest is manifested in the Sunday afternoon ball games. A number of first class baseball parks are scattered over the district, with fences, grandstands and well kept diamonds.

Eighteen towns had a total of twenty-four tennis courts, and while these are used in large part by the officials, they are open for everybody who wishes to play. A half dozen towns had regular teams. The champion tennis player of one community and the surrounding country was a husky coal loader from Mingo.

Children's Playgrounds And Activities

Playgrounds are becoming more and more numerous. They are of every type, from a line of standard apparatus strung along a narrow space on the creek's edge where the town is located between towering mountains, to a three acre grass plot with shade trees. Twenty-one playgrounds were seen, equipped for the children, and several shady parks have benches, and swings hung from trees. There is little supervised playground work carried on other than by the school teachers. A single mining town is hardly large enough in the majority of cases to warrant the expense of employing a playground supervisor.

Most of the children's supervised activities are in connection with the school or Sunday school. On the average, three large entertainments a year are held in every mining town. Besides these there are picnics, swimming parties, and outdoor contests such as the field day program affords.

A few troops of Boy and Girl Scouts or Campfire Girls have been successfully organized, but leadership necessary for such work is a problem in the mining town.

Community Christmas Tree

Aside from the entertainments in the schools and Sunday schools at Thanksgiving, Easter, Children's Day and school commencement, every mining town reported a community Christmas tree under the direction of the churches, schools and Sunday schools. The companies head the lists of contributors for the entertainment, and the majority give additional fruit, candy and possibly a toy to each child. A few give each employee a ham or turkey, but this custom is not as common now as it was in former years.

Movies

Fifty-one towns either support movies or are within a short distance of another mining or independent town where the people may attend the movies two and three

times a week. (Thirty-two towns are within from a mile to five miles of an independent town.) Good pictures are the rule. The shows are well attended, and electric pianos or piano players furnish the music. One manager, raised in the community, declared that the people now dress in better style, have better manners and are generally improved through the influence of moving pictures in the coal fields.

Lodges

Every mining town reported favorably on lodges, such as the Knights of Pythias, Red Men, Odd Fellows, Moose and colored Masons. Fifty-two had two or more organizations of this sort, and others reported a fair percentage of members attending chapters in nearby towns. Women's auxiliaries were not infrequent. The Italians, where employed in large number, have their United Sons of Italy to correspond to the American lodge.

Community Buildings

In practically every town are found separate pool rooms for the colored and white employees. Soft drink and ice cream stands are maintained at these pool rooms. Cigarettes, tobacco, gum and candy can be purchased here.

Aside from the numerous pool rooms, movie buildings, and lodge halls, there are four first class Y. M. C. A.'s and eight community buildings. In a number of towns the movie hall is used for community meetings and school entertainments. One excellent community building burned a year ago and is now being rebuilt; another company plans to build a large community building this year. In addition to other features, it will contain a bath house for the employees and an emergency hospital.

Miscellaneous

Referring to Y. M. C. A. buildings, the two largest ones serve from 2000 to 5000 people. The latter was built by a small coal company on a large scale with a view

to making it a center for the surrounding country in which are located operations of ten or more coal companies, and several independent towns. This is a new departure in the way of community work in this field.

The people in many communities have organized for themselves a number of clubs or other social units for recreation—a community club, a dramatic club, a social and civic club where reading and loafing rooms are maintained. In these club rooms in one instance groups of women teach sewing and cooking, and here they hold women's club meetings.

In one town there was a ball team for fat men and one for thin men which held inter-team games. In another town the colored men seemed so fond of scuffling that the superintendent presented them with boxing gloves, and boxing became a popular community sport.

A number of bands and orchestras were found organized by the employees. Among these was an Italian orchestra and a Hungarian band. There were countless victrolas and pianos, piano players, accordians and other musical instruments in every mining town. One official stated positively that 90 per cent of his employees had one or more musical instruments.

III

HEALTH AND SANITATION

The question of sanitation in a mining town is a business proposition. It pays to have healthful conditions. Men will not keep their families where there is danger of typhoid and other communicable diseases brought about by insanitary conditions. The writer knows one mining town where an epidemic of typhoid broke out several years ago. For a long time the company was unable to secure the best class of workmen because of the reputation the town had received.

In one section of the field studied there were four mining towns with a combined population of approximately five thousand. They are served by one doctor, assisted

by a capable full-time trained nurse. Six cases of typhoid were reported for these towns during the past ten years.

This would indicate that sanitary conditions in these towns is above par. The fact that one doctor and a nurse could adequately serve so many people proves that a great deal of attention has been paid to the protection of the health of the citizens in the towns affected.

If one doctor could satisfactorily serve the needs of a community having five thousand population, according to this ratio, eight doctors would be sufficient for Charleston, a city of forty thousand population. But this city has one hundred ten doctors and about the same number of nurses.

The Company Doctor

The reason for the existence of "the company doctor" is well explained in bulletin 117, 1923, issued by the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor dealing with mining town life, a quotation from which is as follows: "Probably the most serious drawback to living outside the company town was the problem of securing a physician in case of illness. The independent settlement referred to was 15 miles from the nearest private physician, and without telephone." This is an accurate description of the situation in regard to many small, independent towns and rural communities that are too small to support a physician.

With the establishment of the mining town arises the necessity of providing medical care for the people living there. Over a period of many years of actual practice, the plan of collecting monthly subscriptions over the payroll to provide for medical assistance, a sort of health insurance, has proved most satisfactory to emlpoyees, employers and physicians.

The monthly subscription ranges from $2.00 the highest amount for families, to $1.50 the highest amount for single men. The rates vary somewhat in certain communities, but the rates given are the ones in common use throughout this coal field.

Such a system necessarily gives rise to occasional misunderstandings between the physician and his patient, for

the reason that under the subscription agreement the patient may command the services of the doctor any time, day or night, and as frequently as he wishes. Mine employees, being human, occasionally impose unnecessary hardships on the doctor. But the average mine employee is probably no more unreasonable in his demands than any other individual would be. The doctors working under this system, also being human, occasionally neglect their duties. But these misunderstandings are the exceptions and not the rule in the relations between the mining town doctor and the employees.

The average company physician for purely business reasons, if for no other, is anxious to please his patients in order to hold his position. Almost without exception the selection of the company physician in the district studied, is made with the consent of the employees. It occasionally happens that a company employs a physician without their approval but is not the rule. Much oftener it happens in this district that the employees through their local union, select the physician, the company having no voice in the matter.

The majority of the people in the mining towns realize that the subscription payment is a nominal one for a great and valuable community service, and a safeguard every hour against any emergency that may befall them or their children.

And, as one physician stated: "There are good and poor physicians practicing in the coal fields. There are conscientious ones and there are those less scrupulous than they might be. Such is the case among the senators in the United States Congress, among men preaching the Gospel, or among any other professional group, as among coal miners themselves for that matter."

An additional fee of $10 is the common charge for obstetrical deliveries, with no additional charge of course for pre-natal visits and daily visits after child birth. The only other extra costs for medical service are those for the treatment of communicable venereal diseases.

There are 53 physicians doing mining town practice in the towns visited under the subscription system. Where communities are small, one doctor serves two towns. There

are 34 resident physicians; 15 towns are within two miles, and 9 towns are from three to seven miles of their doctors.

Community Nurses

At the present time there are less than a half dozen community nurses employed in this section. This is explained by the fact that as a rule they are maintained at the expense of the companies, which have not recovered as yet from long periods of strike and business depression, during the past few years. In a number of towns nurses have been released because of financial necessity, but are to be re-employed as soon as possible. In several towns visited the companies are contemplating securing a public health nurse who will work under the supervision of the full time public health officer employed by the county.

Dentists

It is not customary for coal companies to employ dentists in the mining towns of this field. However, offices are furnished them when they wish to locate in a mining town where they will have adequate practice. Most people in this section go to larger towns for their dental work.

Five towns have local dentists; 29 are four, or less than four miles from the nearest dentist, and 22 are between six and twelve miles distant; only two towns reported no dentists available in their section, but are served by dentists of Charleston, eighteen miles distant.

In addition to the service cited above, there are traveling dentists who go from town to town, remaining a week or two, or as long as needed, in the community.

Dental Clinics

The American Red Cross, co-operating with the county school boards, sends out a corps of dental hygienists for dental inspection in the schools of Kanawha County. They have made a number of demonstrations in the mining towns surveyed, and, as a result of their work the past year, one of the towns is to have a permanent dental clinic.

The rooms are given free of rent by the company, and the costs of equipment and upkeep are met by the district school board. Plans are being made with the Cabin Creek District School Board for permanent support of dental hygiene service in their schools.

Hospital Service

There are no hospitals located in the mining towns of this district, the towns being served by six hospitals, two located in independent towns in the coal field, three in the city of Charleston and one in Huntington.

The hospitals which serve the mining towns are from two miles to a distance of eighty-four miles away, 31 towns being less than forty miles from the hospitals serving them. The employees in mass meeting discussed and selected the hospitals and if the company offered a recommendation, the final decision rested with the employees.

The company deals directly with the hospital in making the contract and in paying the fees. This is necessary for several reasons. The mining town is permanent, the employees are not, and regardless of the going and coming of the employees the hospital must be maintained for the benefit of the community. But the most obvious reasons for the company handling the matter are that only in few instances do the miners have able leadership within their ranks to execute such arrangements, and because fees are necessarily collected through the company office.

Very often when men are injured to such an extent as to need immediate hospital care, if possible to move them, they are rushed to the hospital on special trains at company expense.

The common charge in this coal field to the employees for hospital service is one dollar a month. Employees in a number of the towns receive this service for fifty cents. This money is collected through the company office; the company bearing the cost of clerical service.

In consideration of these nominal payments, the hospital furnishes care and treatment for any listed employee or any dependent member of his family when sick or injured. Treatment includes any injury or illness, of

the employee or his dependents, with the exception of obstetrical deliveries or communicable venereal diseases, or any contagious disease that would jeopardize the other patients in the hospital. This treatment also includes all sorts of laboratory work, X-ray and surgical operations, surgical specialties, eye, ear and throat work and urological service.

The exclusion of obstetrical deliveries is for two main reasons. The first is that the hospitals cannot take care of all of these cases. The second is that company doctors are paid extra for this service and the hospitals do not wish to compete with the physicians. The same is true in the case of venereal treatments. However, upon special recommendation of the physician in the coal field the hospitals will take a certain number of obstetrical cases each year. In one hospital it was necessary to reserve an entire ward for these special cases.

The hospitals in the coal fields are dependent upon the fees of the miners for their existence, and in case of strikes and business depression, excellent hospitals have failed. They receive the patient regardless of the fact that payments cease, and in only a few instances do they collect back fees. These hospitals make only a nominal profit: a profit that is right and necessary to keep them open for the valuable service they render.

One hospital spent eighteen thousand dollars for radium. This treatment is at the service of the one-dollar-miner-patient. Private patients pay the regular hospital fees. Three miner patients are treated to every private patient.

Town Cleaning

A large majority of the towns were in good condition as to appearance of streets and yards. A few were eyesores, in which the company and people seemed to share equal responsibility.

Reports on town cleaning were as follows: no clean-up, 3; annual clean-up, 9; two and three times a year, 17; quarterly, 6; monthly, 6; weekly, 16; and semi-weekly, 1. All of these clean-ups were at the expense of the coal companies.

The 29 towns of the last four groups were all that could be asked in the way of cleanliness of streets and yards. Of this group 15 reported a total annual expenditure of $30,495.64 for street and yard cleaning and garbage disposal.

Garbage Disposal

Reports on garbage disposal were as follows: no free garbage collection, 23; once a month, 1; every two weeks, 4; once a week, 19; twice a week, 11. Six companies furnish free to each house a sanitary garbage can; three furnish whitewashed, wooden barrels; and the remainder leave the matter of garbage containers to the individuals. All garbage collection and disposal is at the expense of the companies.

Fowls and Stock Penned Up

The towns reporting that live stock was penned up at safe distances from the homes numbered 33; those allowing the stock to run at large numbered 25. And, as one manager stated, "Chickens are free citizens," and found so in 46 mining towns. A few, however, required them penned up during garden season.

Water Supply

The average mine employee uses water furnished from deep, drilled, cased wells provided by the company, but there are a few of the less intelligent and careless types who fail to take advantage of this provision. They drink water from open springs, the river and creeks. This is probably the largest single factor in the spread of typhoid fever in this section.

There seems to be no uniform rule for testing the water for contamination. Tests of drinking water were reported as follows: 3 twice a year; 25 once a year; 9 once in three years; 4 twice in six years; 1 in case of need; and

16 reported no tests made of the water after the wells were drilled, although the water was tested in all cases at that time.

The State Board of Health is equipped to make these tests, and does make them, free of charge at any time specimens are submitted. The practice of regular periodic examinations of drinking water is most commendable.

Toilets

It was found that the great majority of the towns (52) have insanitary toilets. Two towns had installed 15 sanitary toilets each, another had installed 16; and another 30. While one company reported an extensive plan for putting in sewers immediately to cover the entire town.

By "insanitary toilet" is meant that the toilets are not constructed according to requirements for the protection of public health, or to meet enough of these requirements to be safe; safely located in regard to the water supply, ventilated, screened at the base where open, with lids for the seats, and in every respect fly-proof. This does not mean that many of them are not kept in good order by use of disinfectants, frequent cleaning, or filling in and moving.

One town only reported sewers for the entire community. But another town had a sanitary and effective chemical, inside toilet system, which is maintained at a cost to the company of $18 each per year. Two towns had septic tanks; and two others had sanitary, closed vaults.

Much interest was expressed in future plans for installing a practicable sanitary toilet system in a number of towns.

Miscellaneous

One important item which bears directly on the health of the community is the channeling of the creek beds and imprisoning the water between high cribbings or concrete walls. This drains the surrounding land, as well as reclaims land for building purposes, and prohibits

the water from standing under houses and becoming stagnant. Eight or more companies have spent tens of thousands of dollars on this work. It greatly adds to the appearance of the town as well as being an effective flood preventative.

The companies maintain workmen at all times for repairing houses, fences, and walks, as well as to attend to the plumbing where it is installed. In addition the entire towns are gone over annually and repairs made. The majority of the towns are painted about every three years, others every five years, at great cost.

IV

HOMES IN THE MINING TOWNS

Of the 7,928 houses owned by the coal companies of the 58 mining towns surveyed, there are but 182 double houses, or houses for two families. The remainder are single houses of four, six, and a few of eight rooms.

In the 58 towns 386 miners own their own homes. They range from five men in one town to one hundred fifty in another. The labor trains in and out of Charleston every day, in the early morning and late evening, make it possible for miners to own their own homes in the city, in small independent towns, or along the many miles of rural country of the Kanawha Valley. A good bit of this country has been laid off in lots and small farms for the benefit of the employees of the coal field. Improved roads and automobiles afford further opportunities for owning homes.

Rents

Rents for houses in mining towns vary from $1.25 per month per room, to $3 per month per room including electricity in unlimited amount. The average rent charged for the 58 towns included in this report is $1.69 per room per month, or $6.76 for a four-room house. The charge

decreases proportionately as the number of rooms increases to six and eight; a six-room house being $7.50 to $8.50 per month according to the type.

The charges for rent made by the coal companies do not touch the original cost of building, nor cover the annual cost of upkeep in the majority of cases. Where costs of upkeep are covered, or a small profit made, the town is new and depreciation and repairs on the property are practically nothing as yet. Figures were taken covering actual cost of upkeep, fencing and walks, as against actual rental income. In only eleven instances did the income cover the cost of maintenance, and in only three instances did it show an appreciable profit, (depreciation and insurance not included in cost of maintenance.)

A house that now costs almost three times as much to build as a similar one did ten years ago, rents for the same amount as the old one. For example, a house that cost $500 ten years ago rents for $1.50 per room per month. A house of the same design today costs $1500 and rents for the same amount.

Types of Houses

There is such a variety of types of houses that it is conservatively stated a miner may live in the kind of house he prefers. His choice ranges from a plain board, unpainted "bachelor's shanty" to a neat stained shingle, or attractively clapboarded and painted bungalow; and in certain localities even brick bungalows are available. It depends entirely upon the workman's personal desire for a home of a certain kind, his standards of living, social desires, and personal viewpoint of the working conditions offered.

As water seeks its own level, so generally do coal miners live in the better or poorer types of towns found in the coal fields. If their standards of living are high and they desire good schools for their children, they will be found where the best homes and schools are located. If they are indifferent to home surroundings and conveniences for comfortable living conditions, and if the school is of no interest to them, they will be found in the poorer

types of towns. If they are discontents, floaters and agitators of the ignorant class they will live in the poorer houses, in conditions of dirt and unsightliness above which the older generation cannot be raised by outside effort or influence.

Neither the school, church, civic pride, nor environment seem to stir such people from their lethargy. They are the indifferent class that can be found in any community. There seem to be enough indifferent companies to accommodate this class drifting about the coal fields. Some are good workers. These are often found living on the outskirts of the better type towns because they will not care for their homes in such a way as to be welcomed among the more ambitious groups of miners who have higher living standards.

There are a few exceptions to this rule in regard to the better and more modern homes being occupied by the good workmen. Such exceptions are found on the older, pioneer operations where the people are content with a simple type of houses, of the less modern make. They have lived in them from ten, fifteen to twenty years or more. They are happy in their group social life which they have established, have ample gardens, a school that meets their demands, a satisfactory locality as to train service, and working conditions under which they are content to be employed.

Such settlements will often be composed of thrifty foreigners of one nationality, a little Italy or a little Hungary, who send part of their savings back to the mother countries. These folks have their cows, chickens, pigs, goats and geese, and other domestic animals; and almost without exception a well kept garden—in some instances employing old country methods of terracing the steep hillsides with walls of the natural stone at hand, unexcelled examples of thrift and diligence.

Other such groups are native West Virginia folk; many of whom own their own homes in the nearby hill country where they farm when the mines are not operating. In one town half the workmen (150) lived on their farms and rode to work in their "flivvers" across the hills each day. There are grandfathers and great-grandfathers

in these settlements; some of the homesteads over a hundred years old.

By far the majority of coal miners in these valleys are normal American citizens, law abiding and contented, when unexploited by agitators. They have neat homes, demand good schools, attend church and Sunday school, regardless of whether they live in a union, non-union or open shop town. This alone proves that housing conditions in the majority of cases must be satisfactory.

It is the minority, the more ignorant people, colored, white and an occasional foreigner in this field, who are discontents, radicals in regard to labor relationships, who are agitators and trouble-makers. It is this class with their low standards of living, and ignorance, that characterize a mining town as uninhabitable both to the outsider and the respectable mine employee.

This class is content with the poorest sort of housing and living conditions, proven every day by the fact that the better houses given them are shown every sort of disrespect and defacement. It is impossible under the regulations of the miners' union for a company to get rid of this element; discharge for radicalism or trouble-making is never allowed by the union leadership. The best the company can do is to segregate them, "at the lower end of town where their dirt doesn't bother anyone else." But their poisoned minds and low standards contaminate the whole town and lower the morale of the community.

These are the people who by their poor living and attitude, exploited by publicity agents, visited by investigators, have created the idea in the mind of the public that all coal miners, as a class, are unintelligent, poor livers and ignoramuses. The rank injustice to the workers of coal fields is self-evident to anyone who knows the miners from personal contact, either socially or as employer. There is hardly a company official who does not earnestly desire to remove every unsightly house from his operation, provided the element contented to live there go with them.

Inside Finish of Houses

As to inside finish of a miner's home, that, too, is dependent largely upon his tastes, his real desire in regard to a home, and his standards of living.

The majority of the houses are ceiled, then stained, oiled, painted or papered. Many are wall boarded and panelled with strips. A fair number are plastered. In most of the towns there is a variety of inside finishing; in a few all the houses are plastered but these are exceptional towns.

As to papering and inside painting, many companies will furnish the materials if the men will do the work themselves. This method has been found practical because of the frequent movings of some of the workers. The "floaters" seldom appreciate or take care of the improvements of this sort. But where the miners have lived in a town five, ten, fifteen and twenty years such workers receive many favors in the way of paint, paper and conveniences from the companies. In other towns the policy is to charge the miner the exact cost of these items; or to let him handle the matter entirely on his own initiative and at his expense.

Some of the companies which have water systems equip homes with running water, bath and lavatories if the workmen will pay a nominal additional rent. This is necessary because some of the miners fail to appreciate these conveniences. A worker must be of a permanent sort to warrant the company carrying these added expenses. In one town, four of the miners installed shower baths in their homes. In another, several families had their own bath tubs. This proves that what a miner desires in the way of home conveniences he can obtain in the coal fields in one town if not another.

Where homes are necessarily located in a narrow valley, and water drains from the mountain sides, many of the better class of workmen have ditched their yards and put in drain pipes. The poorer type of workmen will let the water stand under their houses and berate the company, whereas a little effort on their part would remedy the matter. In one mining town, the company boarding house of twenty rooms was equipped with steam heat, lavatories and adequate shower baths for all the boarders, as well as with electric lights and other comforts. It is needless to add that the finest type of workmen were found residing there.

The ceiled or wall boarded houses can be attractively painted or papered, and the miners of home loving tastes and high living standards, whether native white, colored or foreign, make their homes attractive.

The homes of the minority, the floater, the radical, the discontent, and agitator, are the homes with greasy walls, dirty floors, and ill-kept yards. Ignorance in a few instances is the diagnosis for such conditions where the miners of this standard of living are law abiding, hard workers. In the homes of the floating population will be heard criticisms of the company, demands for paint and paper free, and accusations of unfairness. Here is found malicious use of company property. There is no evidence whatever of ambition, initiative, or thrift in the home. The little improvements, gardens, flower boxes, and repaired fences are never seen where these people live. No freshly painted wood work, walls or papering. They are a menace to the community's possibility for more attractive physical appearance with their eye-sores of ill-kept dwelling places, both as to interior and exterior.

Electricity

Of the 58 mining towns all but six were furnished with ample electric lights both in the homes and for the streets or roadways. Many of the companies meet the entire cost of the porch lights of every house which take the place of additional street lights. Five of the six towns not having electric lights, use oil lamps. The other was supplied with gas for lighting, heating and cooking. This gas is charged for at the rate of 25 cents per thousand. In five towns lighted with electricity, 80 per cent of the employees use gas for fuel.

Rates for electricity varied. Thirty-three towns charged from 25 cents to 50 cents per light per month, the average being 29 cents. There was no limit to the amount of electricity used. No additional charges were made for electrical appliances such as fans, washing machines and irons. Four towns carried a flat rate averaging $1.41 per month. The most common rate is 25 cents per light per month.

Eleven towns have electric meters installed. Nine of these towns averaged a charge of less than the city of Charleston rates per kilowat hour, and one charged the city rates. The remaining company carried accounts for the lighting company of a nearby independent town whose rate was 3½ cents higher than the highest rate of the other ten towns selling their employees power direct from the company's supply, and 7½ cents higher than the lowest.

Because of the waste of power, and the careless neglect of lights burning in the daytime, companies generally have adopted the policy of cutting the power off from the homes during daylight hours. That is, every day except "wash day and ironing day." In one town a family of eleven had the only electric washing machine in the community, and the power was left on Mondays so that the mother could use her machine. And of course always on Tuesdays for ironing. Where meters are installed there is no difficulty of this sort.

Coal

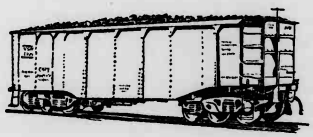
It is estimated that the average family in the coal field uses a ton and a half of coal per month for the year. The charge per ton for coal at the mines to the men averages $1.16 per ton. It is charged to them at flat rates of from 50 cents per month to $2.54 per month, according to the conditions of mining and grade of coal. This coal at the present time costs the company around $2.50 per ton to mine under the existing scale of wages and under ordinary mining conditions. The coal is delivered either by company or independent transfers for between 75 cents and $1.50 per load of one ton, according to the distance and difficulty of hauling. In winter some of the large towns consume fifty tons of coal a day, and the company loses the difference between the "less-than-cost" charge to the miner and the market price of the coal. No matter what the market price of coal, the charge to the miner is not increased. Many of the miners carry their coal and save hauling charges. They will select the best lump coal mined and carry it home on their shoulders.

Water Supply

Twenty-four towns have water tanks supplied by means of electric pumps from deep, drilled, cased wells on the mountainside. This water is piped to the towns where hydrants supply the needs of the people living there; a hydrant to every two houses is the average, though some towns have hydrants at every door others have one hydrant to as many as four houses. In these towns will be found houses that are plumbed and modern conveniences installed. It is impossible to plumb all the houses of a mining town without making changes in rental charges.

Charge is made for water in but one town. Where a house is plumbed this company makes a charge of $1 per month towards the upkeep of the water system. These systems in all cases are quite expensive, both for installation and upkeep. One small town has every house plumbed, the system being planned with the building of the town, and aside from the cost of installation, the system does not carry any charge to offset the cost of maintenance.

The majority of homes are furnished water pumped from deep, drilled, cased wells of pure, cold water. These pumps average one pump to every four houses in the majority of cases, but one pump to eight houses, or ten houses was the plan of a few towns. The water from these drilled wells is of even temperature the year 'round and, being cold, greatly eliminates the need of ice in the summer.



V

MINING TOWN SCHOOLS

There has been practically no study made of the mining town school. The Bureau of Education issued Bulletin No. 21 in 1920 on the subject "Schools in the Bituminous Coal Regions of the Appalachian Mountains." It contains thirty-one pages with many illustrations. Mr. W. S. Deffenbaugh, a specialist in city school administration, made the study and wrote the bulletin. In two issues of Coal Review, October 26, 1921 and November 2, 1921, there appeared two articles on the subject of mining town schools dealing with them as assets to the morale of the communities.

There have been thousands of pamphlets and books written on the subject of rural schools, and many bulletins and books on the problems of the city schools. But to date there has been no intensive study made of the mining town schools, and what is probably worse our teacher-training schools pay little attention to the subject. Since there are more than a million men working in and about the mines in this country, meaning that there are between a million and one-half to two million school children in these communities, it seems some attention should be paid to this subject by professional educators.

Every person who has had anything to do with schools in mining towns will agree that they are entirely different from either the rural or city schools. And the teachers who are trained for city or rural work are not fitted to enter mining town schools and readily adjust themselves to the problems they find there.

Growth

Eighteen years ago, the writer taught in a dilapidated shack in a mining town in the Kanawha District. Today there is a modern, well-equipped four-room school building where the old building stood. During the past few years good substantial buildings have supplanted the old

type, poorly lighted, badly ventilated and insanitary schools. Modern equipment and supplies are used.

According to the officials of the State Department of Education, the mining town schools are considered in every way superior to the rural school that accomodates a similar number of pupils. The three counties in West Virginia having the greatest number of standardized schools are in mining territory. Parts of two of these counties, Raleigh and Fayette, are included in this study.

In regard to standardization requirements, Mr. Muldoon of the State Department of Education, says: "The requirements for standardization of schools are the highest in West Virginia of any found in the United States. We lead in our requirements for the reason that West Virginia benefitting by the experiences of all the other states, selected the best and finest from their plans to standardize her schools."

In the territory, strictly mining, covered by this study, were found four standard graded schools, two standard high schools, and one State trade school of higher learning.

The State Department of Education has no supervisor for mining town schools because there is no appropriation made for such an official. These schools are classed as rural. Yet the rural school supervisor admits the problems of these mining town schools are entirely different from those found in the rural schools. The rural school supervisors inspect the mining town schools that desire classification. Raleigh, Fayette and McDowell counties lead in the number of standardized schools in the State. These are strictly mining communities.

Take a map of West Virginia. Mark on it a red circle for each of the 66 county district school supervisors. With rare exception they are in the coal fields. These supervisors are doing splendid work in meeting the problems in the mining town schools. They are paving the way for State supervision of this department of our educational system.

Every public school in the State offers eight years of elementary work. The six-month school term is obsolete in West Virginia. The minimum school term fixed by law

is now eight months. Illiteracy is on a steady decrease in this State; in 1910, 8.3 per cent, in 1920, 6.4 per cent.

That all of the schools in mining towns are not of the best as to buildings and equipment adequate to meet the needs, is partly due to the rapid development of towns. School boards have not been able to keep pace in providing school facilities. Yet the one-room crowded school has practically disappeared in the coal fields. Even where houses have been utilized to receive the overflow, there is an adequate number of teachers, and some of the most attractive school rooms in the field were found in dwellings converted into school rooms.

Another factor that has retarded the development of the schools has been the uncertainty the past few years of the coal industry caused by strikes and periods of business depression. These conditions have forced some of the companies to decrease the amounts of supplementary aid they have given the schools for equipment and additional teachers' salaries. In some cases companies have entirely withdrawn all financial assistance.

Towns having the best schools have the best workmen. These schools are found where the companies have taken the lead in securing good buildings and equipment; in providing better salaries; congenial living conditions for the teachers; and recreational facilities for the pupils.

The Mining Town Teacher

(This study was begun too late in the school year to secure data from all of the schools in regard to attendance, enrollments, teachers' training and experience. Teachers, school principals, and many interested in the schools were interviewed. The following report is a summary of the problems as seen by these people in service of one kind and another throughout the coal fields.)

"The requirements for teacher's certificates are higher in West Virginia than in any of the other twelve southern states," according to the supervisor of rural schools of

the State Department of Education. And he also stated that the best teachers of small schools in West Virginia, town or rural, are found in the coal fields.

Good salaries are generally paid in the coal fields, and on the average the superiority of equipment and buildings over those in rural sections, have attracted many splendid teachers from surrounding States and from rural West Virginia.

When these teachers come into the coal fields they find what is to them a new social order. The industrial environment is a new experience to the majority of them. Neither by experience nor instruction have they been trained to face the problems of this totally different situation. And, if the complexities of an abnormal period of strike or idleness are added, many become hopelessly confused and discouraged. The situation is being met by special institute work in the districts where there are supervisors, but a solution will not be found until the State takes hold of the problems of the schools in the coal field.

The percentage of turnover of teachers in the mining town schools is very high. This is a great disadvantage to the school and to the communities. There seem to be three principal reasons for teachers leaving after the first year; first, uncongenial living facilities; second, lack of understanding of industrial life; third, in a number of cases, inadequate school buildings and equipment.

One of the big problems as regards the teachers is a place to live. Teachers are not happy when they are compelled to board in miners' homes where they must get up between four and five o'clock in the morning, and are also compelled to live in a manner to which they are unaccustomed. In the large towns the company club houses furnish a congenial home life for the teachers; a few excellent teacherages have been established; and in some places satisfactory boarding houses are available.

Then, too, industrial controversies, rapid growth of mining communities with resultant sudden crowding of the schools, and the evils attendant to political favoritism are other explanations for discouraged teachers, with consequent less effective teaching and desire to move. A few

coal companies are genuinely indifferent to the welfare of the schools, but such cases were rare in the mining towns studied. Another discouragement, typical of the poorer types of towns especially, is the frequent appearance during the term of a number of pupils from families known as "floaters". One teacher stated she was "teaching a parade".

The School Child

The child is the most important factor in the mining town school. To understand the social life of the child gives the basis for a better interpretation of his needs in regard to his school life. Since the mining town affords a peculiar industrial environment there arise definite needs that are not to be found in the average community.

In the mining community, the girl of school age is usually busy at home with household duties. She is given the task of washing dishes, cleaning the house, and caring for smaller brothers and sisters. She is an assistant mother.

With the boy of school age the matter is somewhat different. While he has certain chores at home, especially in gardening time, he feels the responsibility less and consequently has more leisure time. This he usually spends on the streets, in the stores and in recreation buildings.

The long summer vacation for the children in the mining towns needs careful study and readjustment. Those interested in the education and social welfare of the children growing up in this environment should give earnest thought to this matter. The opportunities for the school to make an invaluable extension of its service at small cost is found in the summer vacation.

In one community in the section studied an experiment was tried during the past few months with a vacation Bible school. A teacher was placed in charge, a good attendance was secured, interesting work was done, and exceptional results obtained. The boys and girls were given handiwork which interested them and was very valuable to them.

In general the courses of study have not been especially adapted to the needs of the mining town school chil-

dren. They have not been taught how to live better in their environment. Emphasis has been placed upon this method of teaching for the rural schools and the city schools, but the mining town schools have not been organized with this idea uppermost.

Domestic science should be emphasized for the girls so that they will learn how to conserve food in the home, how to dress themselves properly, and how to look after their health and the health of their families. Waste and extravagance could be largely eliminated by properly teaching the girls the essentials of domestic art. Home-making for girls is a primary need. A large percentage marry and continue life in the coal fields. They need to learn the value of plain foods, economy in the use and cooking of foods, and canning of garden products, the proper care of children, community health and sanitation, dress-making and millinery, and simple improvement and beautification of the homes.

Similarly the boys should be taught the rudiments of manual training. They are naturally interested in the subject, want to make things, enjoy handling tools, and delight in carrying their finished products home. This course should be adapted to the community also. It should include elementary plumbing, building of shelves, walks, fences, and other necessary conveniences needed around the home. Lumber is usually abundant around mining towns. Any company in the field studied would gladly furnish lumber, in the majority of cases free, or at a nominal charge.

The course in agriculture as usually planned in the mining towns is not at all adapted to the needs of the community. It should consist of instruction for boys and girls in intensive gardening. They should be taught how best to cultivate the available hillside and bottom land for vegetables, flower gardens and tree planting.

Music is another subject that must be taught. Nowhere is music more popular, nor more sought after than in the coal field. This is evidenced by the great number of musical instruments to be found, and the interest in singing at religious and other community meetings. One little school in the section studied has purchased a radio

outfit through local entertainments and benefit sales. The rudiments of music taught in the coal fields would mean much to the child as well as being an asset to the community life.

Recreation and play activities are other subjects that need attention. But in this regard mining towns are far ahead of rural communities in West Virginia. Playground equipment of standard make is found in about half of the mining towns studied. Officials of the Department of Education claim that not a rural community in the state has any standard apparatus, and only a few rural communities have given the matter of play activities any consideration.

It must not be inferred that educators are not working on these problems. The standardized schools have made a splendid beginning during the past two years. Mining communities are no different in their lack of adaptation of school courses to their peculiar needs than are thousands of other American communities. But an interpretation of these needs for prospective teachers, and teachers already in the field, is lacking.

The New River State School at Montgomery was visited. Here an honest endeavor is being made through an extension service and summer teachers' institutes, to guide the teachers to interpret for themselves community life in the coal fields, their relation to the communities in which they teach, and their efforts in correlating the child's studies with his environment.

The needs of the mining town schools are related to the training of the child, when met, will mean a steady force in the increase of the permanent residence of miners as well as broadening of their lives by the utilization of opportunities at hand for a fuller and happier life in the community in which they live.

The Coal Company and the Schools

With a few exceptions the officials of the mining towns are vitally interested in the schools in their communities. Some are more interested than others, give more financial assistance and lend their support in other ways. But in every town included in this study, someone,

official or employee, expressed a desire for still better schools than they had.

There is no fixed policy regarding schools. Many of the companies have appropriated large sums in addition to their school taxes in order that they might secure the best buildings, teachers and equipment obtainable. Some leave the matter entirely in the hands of the local school boards taking what falls to their lot in the way of buildings and teachers.

Where a mine official realizes the value of a good school to his community he exerts every effort to obtain the best conditions possible for educational facilities. A few deeply interested companies have been forced to withdraw financial support and active, open interest from the school because of the industrial controversy, in order to maintain neutrality in the school situation. In such cases no one takes the lead to promote interest in school work. Here are found discouraged teachers, often without any appreciation of the basic causes for the predicament in which they find the school.

Just what financial support a coal company should give its schools is a question on which a diversity of opinion exists in this coal field. Those differences of opinion are based on varying local conditions and precedent which when considered seem to justify each case. It is regarded by some as paternalism which will make dependents of the schools, destroy the initiative of county officials and create the impression that the companies must look after the schools in their towns.

Others believe that by developing the mining town school through financial support, a remedy is found for county deficiencies. In many cases if companies did not appropriate funds for the schools, the children would suffer for lack of educational opportunity that they deserve.

But regardless of the practices of the company in each locality, every mine owner sincerely interested in schools, hopes that the time is near when the State Department of Education will make a study of the mining town school problems.

Some of the companies have furnished houses complete for the benefit of their teachers. Rent, fuel, water

and light are free in these teacherages. Other companies have tried the plan of housing their teachers, but have abandoned it because the teachers in many cases are unable to live happily together. The majority of the companies in this section cannot maintain teacherages. They feel that the money they are able to give the schools should be used to improve the classroom work.

It is generally felt that the school situation is essentially a state and county problem and should be taken care of by tax assessments. That there is no more reason why coal companies, the heaviest tax payers in the coal fields, should pay for the maintenance of schools in their communities in addition to their regular school taxes, than the manufacturers in cities should appropriate funds for the benefit of schools where the children of their employees attend.

In the past a number of companies in this field have expended thousands of dollars to supplement teachers' salaries, and have advanced large sums of money to secure better buildings and equipment. Junior high schools are in demand and the companies are ready to give their heartiest co-operation in securing them.

"The best is none too good," is the feeling of the majority of the company officials in the towns studied concerning the schools in their communities.

That the public schools are progressive is evidenced by the fact that West Virginia spent more money on education in 1919-20 than did twenty-one other States of the Union.

VI

RELIGIOUS LIFE

Interest in religious work in coal towns is general, and on the average perfectly normal.

Only one town reported "no religious services, either Sunday school or church," and this because the school house, the only meeting place, had been destroyed by fire,

"but they walk two and a half miles to church at M——, rain or shine." As for all the other towns so numerous were the services that a complete report is impossible.

Buildings

There is an inadequate number of church buildings for the work in this coal field, but undaunted by the shortage the people have utilized schools, community buildings, and houses from which partitions have been removed by the company. There are 87 buildings in use in the 58 mining towns visited for religious services; and about 14 other independent churches attended by the mining population. Usually the coal companies erect church buildings with the establishment of the town. In some of the older towns ground space has been offered for independent church buildings but the denominations have either been unable to unite on the matter or have failed to raise the funds necessary for the building and equipment.

One company offered to double any amount raised and to give the ground free; this in a town with a high class and permanent mining population, but year after year passes and the people remain content with the school buildings for religious services. In another town a lodge and a church denomination erected a two-story building, the church services are held downstairs and the lodge has its hall upstairs. The company gave the ground. Many cases may be cited where a little initiative and a greater desire would soon build a church on ground gladly given by the companies.

Sunday Schools

The Sunday school work going on in this coal field is gratifying. With the exception of the town cited, all have from one to five Sunday schools meeting in the town every Sunday. The leadership is local and many of the leaders deserve the highest commendation for the work they are doing. In the 58 towns 95 Sunday schools were found, white and colored, of which 51 were Union (non-denominational.) They are attended by both the parents

and the children. There are a number of splendid Bible classes for men. Other religious activities may be found in Ladies' Aid Societies, Christian Endeavors, Singing Classes or Choirs, and Wednesday night Prayer Meetings.

As to enrollment it was never reported "poor," always "fine" or "very good," and a few times "fair." In many towns large Sunday schools are thriving under the enthusiasm and effort of efficient local leaders. Often they are company officials and their wives, who, as ardent religious workers, give much time and effort to the work.

Where the Presbyterian religious workers are found under the Home Missions Department, interest in religious activities is generally reported "fine, couldn't be better!" And the enrollment is excellent.

The type of work these religious workers are carrying on in a large territory in the coal field is shown by the report from a small community with a normal population of 500. Here in one year were held 244 meetings, of which 173 were community gatherings, 59 were for children, including a girl's club, and 12 monthly meetings for women. In addition 431 visits were made to the homes in the interest of religious work.

Ministers

The general interest in religious work is the more remarkable and inspiring because of the scarcity of resident ministers. There are many good itinerant ministers who travel about the field, and hold church services every two weeks in certain towns. There are many men who preach on Sunday and dig coal during the week. But the absence of resident ministers has led to either local leadership in church services or no services other than Sunday school.

VII

THE COMPANY STORE

Competition

Twelve company stores in the mining towns surveyed claimed no local competition in their business from inde-

pendent stores. Forty-four claimed a total of 220 competitive independent stores or an average of five stores to every company store. Two coal companies rented their store building to independent store men in no way connected with the company.

This does not include the competition of mail order houses such as Sears-Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, etc.; goods ordered through traveling representatives, and purchases made in Charleston and other cities.

Prices

It was found that company stores do not make unfair charges for merchandise in this section. The volume of competition is sound evidence that the people are able to trade where the best prices may be obtained.

Prices on staples, meats, perishable foods, butter, eggs and even clothing were taken at random under varying conditions. These prices averaged the same as prices for the same grades of goods in Charleston. Wherever a price was higher it was to meet the additional freight charges over the Charleston rate, and to cover unusual losses. For example, in one town, eggs were three cents higher than the Charleston market price. It was found that this did not cover the loss from breakage plus the additional express charge. On the other hand shoes of a popular make were three dollars less than the same shoes were selling for in Charleston.

In one town all prices in the company store were one cent to three cents higher than anywhere else where prices were taken. It was discovered that the freight rate was 70 cents over that of other towns, that the branch line had no express service, and hence a greater loss from damaged perishable foods. In no case, as hard as comparisons are to make on account of the wide variety of grades of goods, was a higher price found that could not be accounted for. If higher than the city price, it was because of freight, express or losses by damaging of goods; if lower in price, it was because the goods were bought direct from the factory.

So great is the loss on green foodstuffs that one wonders at the companies' handling them at all on the

branch lines of the railroads. Crates of fresh strawberries consigned to a company store were seen standing in the rain at the junction, and on one occasion bunches of spinach were strewn over the platform of the station from broken crates and wilted beyond use in the hot sun. Yet in spite of these difficulties fancy cucumbers, the season's first tomatoes, head lettuce, new onions, cabbages, bunch beets and celery were found for sale at Charleston prices in company stores long before the local gardens were yielding.

Quality of Goods

As to the quality of goods handled by the company stores, it meets the demand of the people in the community, and every store manager tells the same story: "We cannot sell much second grade stuff. The women won't use it and the men won't buy it. They simply demand high class articles and the best grades." On the shelves of these stores everywhere can be found fancy brands of canned fruits and vegetables such as the best stores in Charleston carry.

The best grades of butter, frying fats, smoked and fresh meats are handled. The majority of these company stores have excellent means of refrigeration for carrying this sort of foodstuff. Many electric ice-making machines are installed in meat departments, cooling the refrigerator with its meats and perishable foodstuff, and frequently supplying ice to the community.

Ice is supplied the people also by means of storage ice houses, and a charge of about fifteen cents more per hundred is made over the city rate to cover loss from shipping and handling costs at the storage house. The freight for carload lots shipped at regular intervals, over as much as forty miles, is an item in making the ice rate seem high.

One company maintains an ice plant, "pop factory" and meat market in combination. The trucks deliver meat and ice over a 22-mile route three times a week.

The Store Man's Job

The problem of carrying every article, large or small, that may be called for in a small town has to be met by the store man. He must be clothing merchant, haberdasher, hardware merchant, shoe merchant, grocer, butcher and druggist. He must also be wise enough to know what qualities of each to carry to meet the greatest demand, as it is impossible for the company store to carry a line of each article, such as all qualities of calico, to suit every taste.

As druggist, the store man must carry an adequate line of home remedies and first aid supplies. Close observation was made of this line of goods for the patent medicines of the varieties harmful to children, such as pain killers and vicious soothing syrups. It was a needless undertaking, for company store managers are in general opposed to these goods, and since national prohibition became effective such goods have lost their popularity. As one manager said, "There are no longer any high class drinks in proprietary medicines." A stray peddler of pain killers may wander through the coal fields but his trade is limited. The home remedies consist of standard articles used in the average home and prescribed by the physician.

The store man will tell you his is a hard and thankless task. Nowhere will be found finer store men rendering a greater service to the community in which they live. They are good listeners and hard workers. Enumerate the complaints that go to six small town stores and you will have the sum total delivered daily at the company store.

Coal Miners as Customers

When asked if the miners were particularly extravagant as a class, the store men, superintendents and managers all answered in general: "Coal miners are no more extravagant as a class than Methodists or Baptists. They are like any group with its varying tastes for extravagance, moderation or thrift. Whatever type you want to find in a town you can find, and to generalize about miners being extravagant becomes merely an expression of a personal opinion based on your own standard of living. Some

conserve food, clothes, and save money for a farm or a home in an independent town near the mines. Others buy automobiles and victrolas for the pleasure of their families, eat the best food, go to the movies, save little or nothing, exactly as do the members of any group of people selected at random in America."

VIII

LAW ENFORCEMENT

County Officials

The usual county officials have jurisdiction in enforcing the laws; the sheriff, his deputies, magistrates, and constables. These officials are of the usual type. Some are conscientious, effective in keeping order, and have the earnest co-operation of the coal companies and their employees; others, a negligible number, are found to be lax in their duties, and not respected by the intelligent people of the community.

One difficulty encountered, in regard to the effectiveness of the county officials, is the distance in a number of cases to be traversed between a mining town and the headquarters of these officials. A lawbreaker would in some instances have twelve or more hours' start out of town before the proper officials, with authority to issue a warrant for arrest could be reached, or take action in making an arrest. This places a certain responsibility of police control on company officials, unsought and undesired, but which seems absolutely necessary in emergencies. In some towns because of their personal relations with their men, in which they maintain the respect and confidence of the employees, a mine superintendent will be more effective in maintaining order than will a county official.

The State Constabulary

Proper law enforcement is the rule where the State Constabulary have unrestricted jurisdiction as State rep-

resentatives. There is no complaint of bootlegging, illicit gambling or other disorders in such communities. Respect for the authority of the State is everywhere maintained.

Repeatedly the remark was made. "Since the coming of national prohibition and the State Constabulary, our section of the coal field is a different, and a happier place in which to live."

In the city of Charleston with a population of about 40,000 people there are sixty-eight police officers. Along a certain part of Cabin Creek with a population of some 15,000 people the county maintains one constable, which would not be considered adequate protection at any time or in any American community for such a number of people. "Now", as one superintendent put it to his men, "we have the State Constabulary for the adequate protection of every man, woman and child in our town."

The only criticism heard of the State Constabulary was that at times they were too rigid in their enforcements. Whatever purely personal opinion was expressed in regard to these officers, it was always with the admission that peace and order were fully maintained and appreciated. A petty form of lawlessness, the wilfull destruction of property belonging to others, has decreased noticeably under the jurisdiction of the State Constabulary, which form of lawlessness seems to be under little control of other authorities in sections of the coal field.

In conclusion, it is the general opinion of officials, intelligent mine employees and many railroad workmen, in the sections under the jurisdiction of the Constabulary, that the influence of the State Constabulary in maintaining law and order, in creating respect for constituted authority, as well as for law itself, cannot be overestimated.

IX

TRANSPORTATION

Railroad Service

Every mining town in this coal field is reached by railroad, and passenger train service is adjusted to suit the needs of the communities. Two trains each way daily

is the rule. Some towns have two in and one out, and those along the main lines of the C. & O. and the New York Central railroads, or accessible by interurban, have excellent service. A small number have only one train each way daily, but regular taxi service is maintained in these localities. Labor trains run daily from Charleston to accommodate the employees of the mining towns along the Kanawha River. Employees can go a distance of thirty-five miles for 17 cents on the labor trains. Many of them own their own homes in Charleston and along the main lines of the railroads.

Two companies run private branch lines from their mines to the main line of the railroad for the transportation of their employees who utilize the labor trains from the city. One of these companies makes a nominal charge for use of the branch line to employees. The other company furnishes train service a distance of 3½ miles free of charge for all employees.

There are 316 miles of passenger transportation service in the territory studied; 289 by steam railroad and 27 by interurban electric. In a straight line this trackage would reach from Harper's Ferry, the most eastern point of West Virginia, to Kenova the farthest and most western point of the State, and have 41 miles of track left over.

Taxi Service

Taxi service is found in every section of the coal field in good weather, and in all seasons where the improved roads are completed. The drivers, often miners themselves, make a special rate for transporting specified numbers to and from work each day. Independent taxi companies serve a number of mining communities. The women use taxis going to and from independent stores to trade. Taxis are also used to meet trains not served by branch lines.

Automobiles

The number of cars owned by mine employees is increasing rapidly. Every make of commonly used car is found in the coal fields. Cars average in price either high

or low in accordance with local road conditions. The demand is for new cars. It is difficult to sell used cars to mine employees.

In a representative group of 11,957 mine employees, the enumeration of thirty-nine towns chosen indiscriminately over the district, 12 per cent own automobiles at this time. This following a long period of strike and depression, and when only two and three days employment a week is common because of railway car shortage and lack of orders. An order for 75 cars in one mining community for the month of June was reported. In the city of Charleston of the 11,200 individual taxpayers 18 per cent own pleasure cars. (The District figures are based on estimates made by mine officials or, in the majority of cases, on actual count, and the figures for the city from records of the County Assessor).

Garages for mining towns have become a serious problem in the past year. They are being built by the coal companies in groups under a single roof to conserve ground space. There are many individual garages also. The rent for these is nominal, from $1.50 to $2.00 per month. At $2 per month rent it is estimated that seven and a half years will elapse before the cost of the sheet iron building will be realized; repairs, renewals and interest on investment not considered.

Roads

Construction of improved roads is making rapid strides throughout the field. There are now 62 miles of paved roadway, 9½ miles of gravel surfaced road, 110 miles under construction to have concrete or gravel finish, and over a thousand miles under county maintenance.

Thirty-nine of the towns included in the 58 of this report are located on paved or gravel roads, or roads under construction at this time. Fourteen towns only are inaccessible in winter by automobiles because of swollen creeks and unimproved roads; and five are less than five miles distant from improved highways. In seven of the 14 towns considered inaccessible by automobile in winter, a total of 126 pleasure cars owned by mine employees were

enumerated. The other seven towns have a number of cars but the enumeration was not taken.

A number of companies anxious to have improved roads connecting their towns with the main highways have advanced large sums of money to the county for hastening the completion of the work. They consider that good roads broaden the opportunities of social life in the mining communities, give the people access to churches, stores, movies and other affairs of neighboring mining and independent towns, as well as contact with cities. One of the most important features of good roads will be the possibility of more consolidated schools, and the increasing of high school enrollment by school transportation systems.

X

MISCELLANEOUS

A Summary of the Average Fixed Family Expenses in a Mining Town

So much has been said and inferred about the higher cost of living in a mining town that it is interesting to note from actual figures the cost to a mine employee per month for items of fixed expense in the coal field studied, which items are common costs to be met by all men maintaining families under ordinary living conditions everywhere:

	Per Month
Rent, (6-room house, $2 per room)	$12.00
Water, (well, pump or hydrant)	00.00
Lights, electric, (rate 25c—7 drops)	1.75
Coal, flat rate, (avg. 1½ tons per month)	1.25
Doctor, for man and family	2.00
Hospital care, for man and family (including any treatment, major or minor operation and X-ray without extra cost)	1.00
Garbage collection	00.00
State Compensation, for injury and death with monthly payment to widow	00.00
Burial Fund, (covers cost of burial for man and family, and payments made only as long as fund is less than $500-$800, when payments cease)	00.50
	$18.50
Accident Insurance, (not compulsory) pays $1 per day benefit for accident and health; from $25 to $75 for child or adult in burial benefit	2.80

The above table shows that the miners in this field have a lower fixed expense than is found for the same items in other small towns. The cost of having a doctor, and the hospital benefits afforded for a nominal sum, are items that any man would gladly pay for the health insurance they offer his family, but which outside of industrial communities cannot be secured. Neither do the farm population have such an opportunity, and are refused service by the miners' hospitals on payment of any such charge. The better type of houses offered the mine employees are not rented in independent towns, wired for electricity (at flat rates), for the above charge, which is the charge for the best six-room house found in this coal field, and at the highest rent charged in the towns visited.

Eight-Hour Day Prevails

All the mines in the town visited have the eight-hour working day. The United States census report of 1920 has this statement relative to the laws of labor in the mines of West Virginia: "In the coal mining industry these hours prevailed (44 to 53 per week), with an eight-hour day and a six-day week."

Workmen's Compensation Provided by State Law

Men injured in the coal fields of West Virginia receive benefits for injury, commensurate with the percentage of their disability, from the State Compensation Commissioner.

In event of a man's death while at work at the mines, the widow receives a monthly allowance towards her support until death; in case of her remarriage within two years, this allowance is readjusted. An additional sum is allowed her for each child under sixteen years of age. Provisions are also made for dependent parents, or for any person wholly dependent upon the deceased.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Newspapers

Every mining town in the valleys of the Great Kanawha and Coal River receives news by two or more large daily newspapers widely subscribed for. The Charleston and Cincinnati papers lead in circulation.

Telephone and Telegraph

Telephone and telegraph contact with the country is afforded every town. The employees, and others living in the locality, on paying customary tolls and charges for messages, are allowed the use of these services whenever desired.

Mail

Every mining town visited has at least one mail in and out daily. A large majority have two each way or two in and one out. A fair number have even better service where located on the main lines of the railroads.

VEGETABLE GARDENS

As building space is often very limited in the narrow valleys where mining towns are located, the people have their gardens on the hillsides and in the bottom lands surrounding the town. These are in addition to the yards, filled with both flowers and vegetables around many of the houses in a large majority of the towns.

The average number of employees who put in gardens this year, on the hillside or bottom land in forty-one towns was 53 per cent; ranging anywhere from 5 per cent to four towns claiming 100 per cent gardens, with eight others claiming over 80 per cent. In no instance was a company found other than glad to have the people of the community utilize any available ground for gardens.

Absolutely no rent is charged for a foot of garden space. In the majority of cases the company supplies a mule and plow free; in a number of others independent plowmen do the work for a nominal charge; and still other mine superintendents send out a man and a mule to plow the gardens in the spring at company expense.

Some of these gardens are quite remarkable, and all of them are examples of diligence and thrift seldom credited to the coal miners of West Virginia either by investigators or writers.

One manager said: "The Italians have the prettiest flowers and gardens in the town." And indeed they were pretty, for the steep hillside was terraced with perfectly laid stone walls, and each terrace was planted with a different vegetable. Mostly "hot stuff." "They can raise more on one of those little terraces than most people can raise on half an acre of ground. They allow about four tomatoes to a plant, but you ought to see them for size."

Other attractive gardens were those of the native folk, with their hills of rich, green corn with bean vines creeping up the long stalks. Or prosperous potato and tobacco patches, beets, lettuce and onion beds.

Opportunities in Mining Communities

No man in the coal fields studied can truthfully say that he has no opportunity to advance if he so desires. From "the point of the pick," or from the driving of a mule to a mine owner, may be written about many of the coal operators in this district.

It is estimated that out of every hundred foremen in the field, ninety-nine began work in the mines as a trapper, mule driver or laborer. Out of every hundred superintendents or managers, ninety came up from the position of laborer. And seventy of every hundred mine owners came from the ranks of the men who take the coal from the hills.

Promotion is rapid for the fellow who has real ability and wants to succeed. The coal industry has grown by leaps and bounds during the past few years, and executives have been needed for this expansion. The best place for a mine to get men for responsible positions is to develop them. This has been done in all of the towns covered in this study.

A Fellow Feeling

One is struck by the neighborliness found in mining towns. Good fellowship prevails. Those enduring affliction, sorrow or trouble, know. Money is never a question —every service is rendered and any sacrifice made. The

fellow in trouble is looked after. No one need go without clothes, food or shelter unless he is a fullfledged idler. When a "paper" is sent through the mines to help a fellow out who is in distress, it is signed by employers and employees, not as officials and workmen, but as friends.

In the everyday work, it is simply man to man, no matter what the difficulties from controversial questions or the momentary misunderstandings. Employer and employee meet silently, understandingly, and without fear. They know they must work each for the other, if their interests are to prosper.

In the coal field there is a great, intangible bigness of life. A silent, understanding kindness; a living, gripping spirit of service; and an underlying, fitting sense of justice to all. In its presence there is no recognition of position, race or color—all men are equal.

XI

CONCLUSIONS

I. *The small mining town is a better place in which to live than the majority of small independent towns.*

There are more home conveniences such as electricity, water, well-built, comfortable homes, board walks, fenced yards and gardens, and the majority of them are more sanitary.

There are more advantages socially, found in the community buildings, Y. M. C. A. buildings, picture shows, and parks.

The schools, many of the churches, Sunday schools and other educational and religious activities are superior to those to be found in the usual small town of equal population.

Athletics for children and adults are provided for in ball parks, children's playgrounds, and recreation buildings. The ordinary small town of like number of inhabitants has not facilities to compare with those to be found in the mining towns.

II. *Life in the small mining town is a normal social life.*

People are no different from those to be found anywhere else in the United States. Owing to the community interest, people are drawn closer together than the people living in most small towns.

There is no dearth of occupations. Everybody living in mining towns does not load coal. In one town 110 different occupations were listed.

The people are normal, self-respecting citizens. They are independent in thought and action.

A certain percentage of people living in mining communities may be termed as "floating population." They boast about the number of towns in which they have worked; the number of payrolls on which their names have been listed. However, when a man stays one year in a town, the chances are he will become a longtime resident of that community.

III. *The workmen do not usually own their homes in the community where they work.*

This is unfortunate. But generally the coal company operating the mines does not own the property. It is under lease and consequently the company cannot sell the workmen their homes.

As the life of many coal mines is short, being from 25 to 35 years, the employees would not care to purchase property, if possible to do so, for permanent residence in such localities.

To maintain a uniform and neat appearance, as well as for sanitary purposes, it is just as well that the company owns all of the houses.

IV. *A reformation has come about in the mountains of West Virginia.*

The change from isolated mountainous conditions to well-regulated towns, is phenominal. The log cabins of one

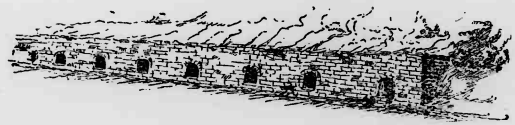
and two rooms have been replaced by well-built comfortable homes of four, six and eight rooms that have modern conveniences.

Educational and social conditions are now afforded where before opportunities for development were scarce.

The arm of the law has been strengthened for the protection of these people and their families.

The world is at the doors of these mountain people, who for generations were shut off by barriers of isolation.

Unlimited opportunities are afforded the native mountain men and the foreign employes to advance to responsible positions, and to become mine owners.



AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION

CHARLESTON, WEST VA.

"To re-affirm faith in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States"

AMERICA FIRST DAY: Inaugurated, 1921, by the American Constitutional Association. Observed for three years on the Sunday prior to July 4th. Now a Red Letter Day throughout West Virginia. Over four thousand meetings held in 1923.

AMERICAN CITIZEN: The regular patriotic publication of the American Constitutional Association. Issued semi-monthly during the school year and sent to schools and members.

RADICALS EXPOSED: The American Civil Liberties Union, composed of advocates of so-called "free speech" exposed during their activities in West Virginia, in their affiliation with the Red movements working to destroy our Government.

Special bulletin service rendered business men with inside information concerning intelligent radical leaders in the United States brought out at the trial of William Z. Foster. This evidence was a clean-cut exposure of the Communist Party of America.

PROPAGANDISTS ATTACKING WEST VIRGINIA MET: A constructive and intensive publicity campaign was waged to counteract false stories and biased criticisms of propagandists from outside the State. With ulterior motives they have seized upon every means to dishonor the name of West Virginia and to belittle her people as American Citizens.

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